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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

September 20, 1985

Georgiy Arbatov: An "Americanist" on the Rise

## Summary

Georgiy Arbatov appears to be at the height of his influence as an adviser to Kremlin policymakers. He is a skilled propagandist and the Soviet Union's best known expert on US affairs. Arbatov's increased visibility under General Secretary Gorbachev, combined with reports of an increase in the staff of his USA and Canada Institute and rumors of an impending promotion of Ambassador Dobrynin to First Deputy Foreign Minister, are indicative of the centrality of the United States in the new Soviet leadership's foreign policy formulations. Gorbachev's more sophisticated approach to the "US problem," exemplified by propaganda ploys designed to exploit differences between the United States and its allies and skillful use of Western media, probably reflect Arbatov's counsel. [redacted]

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Georgiy Arbatov's ambitions were briefly frustrated during Chernenko's reign but he is back in the limelight under Gorbachev. His appearance next to the General Secretary at the recent interview with Time magazine editors is only one of several signs that his career has emerged from the doldrums. After being absent from Soviet television screens and newspapers for more than a year, Arbatov showed up on the popular current affairs program "Studio 9" shortly after Gorbachev took office in March, and his commentaries are once again appearing in Soviet dailies. Soviet officials have told Americans that Gorbachev now

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted]  
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relies heavily on Arbatov's assessments of events in the United States and Canada. Arbatov may try to capitalize on this impression in his discussions with US officials. In the past he has offered to serve as a "back channel" for communications between Moscow and Washington, and he may repeat the offer during his current visit. [redacted]

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In mid-May Arbatov intimated that Gorbachev had encouraged him to expand the staff of his USA and Canada Institute and to install more analysts in Washington to help his man at the Soviet Embassy, Sergey Rogov, focus on US affairs. At the same time, it was rumored among Soviets abroad that Arbatov, already a full member of the Central Committee, is in line for promotion to the party's Secretariat. (According to the rumor, he would replace either Boris Ponomarev, head of the Central Committee's International Department, or Konstantin Rusakov, who heads the committee's Bloc Liaison Department.) Such a step would thrust Arbatov into the apex of the ruling party hierarchy. His planned trip to China this October may be a further harbinger of broadened influence and expanded responsibilities. [redacted]

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### The Andropov Connection

Arbatov's rise to prominence began in 1964 in the Central Committee's Bloc Liaison Department, which supervises relations with ruling Communist parties. Together with several other bright young analysts whose careers have since prospered, he was drafted into an elite consultants group by the department's head, Yuriy Andropov. As Andropov acquired increasing influence, Arbatov's career--although encountering occasional snags--flourished. [redacted]

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In 1967, when a new Institute of the USA and Canada was spun off from the prestigious Institute of World Economics and International Relations, it was Arbatov, with the help of his powerful patron, who was appointed its head. From the institutional base of this increasingly influential think tank, Arbatov soon established himself as the Soviet Union's preeminent "Americanist." His burgeoning status was clearly signaled in 1973 when Brezhnev brought him along on his visit to the United States and introduced him to President Nixon at Camp David. Arbatov soon began to reap the rewards of an apparatchik on the fast track: full membership in the USSR Academy of Sciences, with its generous lifetime stipend, in 1974; candidate membership in the party's ruling Central Committee in 1976, and full membership in 1981. [redacted]

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### Changing Political Fortunes

Arbatov's influence appeared to be waning in the last year of Brezhnev's rule, as Soviet-US relations continued to deteriorate. But that situation changed when Arbatov's patron

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Andropov succeeded Brezhnev as General Secretary in November 1982. Reports during Andropov's tenure indicated that the status of Arbatov's institute was soaring--to the evident displeasure of some in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs--and rumors circulated that Arbatov was slated for promotion to a higher position. It was also reported that Arbatov was cultivating a close relationship with another Andropov protege--Politburo member Mikhail Gorbachev. [redacted]

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When Chernenko succeeded Andropov in February 1984, Arbatov's career trajectory suddenly flattened. The hitherto ubiquitous adviser disappeared from the media, and there were reports that his political stock had fallen. Foreign Ministry officials began putting out the word that Arbatov could no longer be considered a reliable interpreter of Soviet foreign policy, and Arbatov himself began to avoid contacts with US officials. His eclipse during this period, and reappearance after March this year, lend substance to speculation that he had offended Chernenko--perhaps by too assiduously courting Chernenko's rival Gorbachev--and had run afoul of then Foreign Minister Gromyko, perhaps because of some freewheeling comments by institute staffers on arms control issues. [redacted]

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Arbatov may now have had his vengeance on the Foreign Ministry. [redacted] Gorbachev rejected the answers that the Foreign Ministry had supplied to him in response to the written questions submitted for his interview with Time, in favor of the responses that had been formulated by Arbatov. (According to Rogov, Arbatov was present at the Gorbachev interview because he had prepared the answers Gorbachev was giving.) Rogov claimed that the USA and Canada Institute now had the "inside track" with Gorbachev, suggesting that this might be due partially to its performance compared to the Foreign Ministry's on the interview. Although Rogov's remarks may have been colored by his institutional loyalties, the language in the Time interview was quite similar to that Arbatov had used in an earlier article, lending credence to the story. [redacted]

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### Arbatov's Institute

Arbatov's institute reportedly has little access to classified data, but it often is called upon to produce reports for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Committee's International and Bloc Liaison Departments, the KGB, and the General Secretary's personal staff. [redacted]

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[redacted] it produced a "stream" of reports for the Foreign Ministry and Central Committee, "accompanied by analysis when appropriate," that could appear in a variety of formats, ranging from "spravki" (information summaries of five to six pages covering a specific current topic) to analytical "think pieces" of up to 24 pages. Major papers sent forward by the institute reportedly include the historical background of the

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issues involved and, in some cases, a list of theoretical Soviet moves and probable foreign reactions--so-called "background" and "option" papers. The institute is said to assiduously avoid, however, any policy recommendations. [redacted]

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Although Arbatov has said that he finds American politics so volatile that he would never think of predicting the outcome of a US election, his institute clearly is called upon to make just such predictions and also to forecast the future directions of US policy. The institute reportedly has had mixed success on that score. [redacted] one of its recent major successes was its accuracy in predicting the US response to a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Although its assessment reportedly was rejected as alarmist by the leadership, subsequent events proved the institute's prescience. [redacted]

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### Role as Propagandist

In the past 10 years Arbatov has traveled to the United States at least 15 times, usually as a member of delegations to scientific groups or arms control or academic conferences. According to Soviet defector [redacted] Arbatov (like any prominent official traveling abroad) receives instructions from the Central Committee on the political line he is to express in his conversations and discussions. Therefore, although he ostensibly represents his institute when he travels, his activities support those of the larger, highly centralized, Soviet propaganda apparatus. Arbatov's reputation as the Soviet Union's leading Americanist and ties to the Soviet leadership have given him unusual access to US officials, academics, and the media, and have made him a valuable propaganda asset. [redacted]

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### Policy Views

Arbatov's real views about the United States are obscured by his ability to adapt to the prevailing political line. In the early 1970s, he reportedly advised the Brezhnev regime that it could develop a beneficial relationship with the new US administration despite President Nixon's record of harsh statements about the USSR, and his status was considerably enhanced during the ensuing period of improved relations. There are indications that he offered the same advice when President Reagan took office and that he suffered a setback when US policy during the early years of the Reagan administration maintained what the Soviet leaders perceived to be a harshly anti-Soviet course. [REDACTED]

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In a possible attempt to recover his lost political ground, Arbatov in recent years has adopted an acerbic tone in both public and private commentaries about US policy and has criticized President Reagan in sometimes sarcastic terms. Nonetheless, while cynical about the intentions of the Administration, he has not joined the most pessimistic Soviet analysts such as International Information Department chief Leonid Zamyatin, who argue that long term political, economic and social trends in the United States favor a deterioration in relations that will continue indefinitely. Instead, he has publicly taken the position that fiscal pressures and growing public concern over the international situation could force future US administrations, if not the present one, to become more conciliatory. Arbatov's public statements suggest that he believes Soviet interests can best be served by appealing to what he characterizes as those currents of US public opinion that could have a "moderating" influence on the current administration and by stressing the divergent interests of the United States and its allies. Arbatov prides himself on his knowledge of the US political scene, and he apparently has convinced Gorbachev of the value of his insights in the furtherance of Soviet objectives. [REDACTED]

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### Implications

The apparent rise of Arbatov and his institute comes at a time when another sophisticated observer of the American scene, Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin, is rumored to be in line to become First Deputy Foreign Minister and when the new Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, has drafted Sergey Tarasenko, an experienced specialist in US affairs, to serve as his special adviser. The increased influence of Americanists of this caliber provides additional evidence of the centrality of the United States in Soviet foreign policy formulations and is consistent with Gorbachev's apparent effort to seek new solutions to the "US problem." For example, Gorbachev reportedly has instituted

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brainstorming sessions with his advisers in preparation for his meeting with President Reagan. The new General Secretary already has proved his astuteness as a negotiator and manipulator of Western public opinion, and the counsel of knowledgeable advisers like Arbatov and Dobrynin can only make him a more formidable adversary. [REDACTED]

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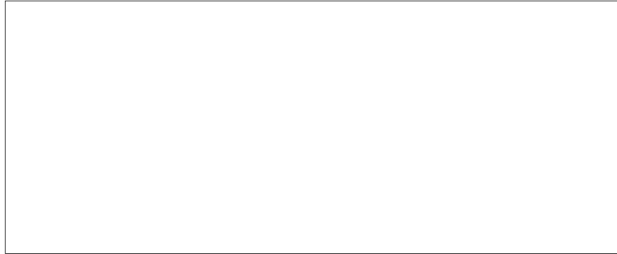
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